

Attachment Overview

This attachment will review the foster/adoptive parent training available. It is divided into two basic parts: pre-service and in-service training. The attachment also includes an explanation of the competencies upon which most of the training is based. Competencies refer to the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully parent the children in our care.

Because some knowledge and skills are essential before children are placed with families and other knowledge and skills would be more appropriate after licensing, training competencies were organized into two groups: pre-service and in-service.

I. Pre-Service Training and Competencies

A. The pre-service competency categories for parents include:

1. Protecting and Nurturing Children: Children placed with foster families and adoptive families need to live in a safe place that keeps them from harm, is friendly, and where the parents show they care. Some children who have not been kept safe or cared for may not accept or understand the efforts to do so at first. Others are hungry for attention. The pre-service training will help the caretaker to understand a child's feelings and reactions to separation and help the caretaker to deal with those feelings and reactions.
2. Meeting Developmental Needs and Addressing Developmental Delays: For most of us, growing up is a natural, predictable development process. For example, infants who have the opportunity and encouragement to walk at the right stage of their development will learn how to walk. Many of the children who need foster families or adoptive families did not have the opportunity or encouragement to grow by learning how to do things at the "right" time in their development. They may be "behind" in some ways or "ahead" in others, compared with children of the same age who had their developmental needs met. The pre-service training helps prospective foster parents and adoptive parents understand the reasons for these developmental delays and differences and how to cope with them.
3. Supporting Relationships Between Children and their Families: Birth family relationships include brothers, sisters, and other relatives as well as parents. Children do not arrive at the door of a foster family or adoptive family without bringing some kind of personal history with them. Even infants who have never been held by their parents have a prenatal, birth, or hospital history. The memories, experiences and attachments children bring with them will vary, but they will come with the child. The pre-service training prepares the caretaker to understand the importance of a child's history and how to deal with it.

4. Connecting Children to Safe, Nurturing Relationships Intended to Last a Lifetime: The Division believes—and the law requires—that children are entitled to permanent, lifetime family relationships. Children's Division (CD) works with the parents to correct problems so children can return home whenever possible. If the parents cannot or do not respond, the Division looks for another permanent family for the children. The different roles of foster parents and adoptive parents in providing a permanent family for a child will be explained in the training sessions.
5. Working as a Member of a Professional Team: Whatever a child's circumstances, needs or past experiences, the Division, foster parents, and adoptive parents work together for the child's benefit. There are many troubled families and children who need help. The work that needs to be done is too much for any of us to do alone.

Adoptive parents are expected to meet additional competencies:

6. Knowing how adoptive families are unique;
7. Understanding the importance of separation, loss, and grief in the adoption process;
8. Understanding attachment and its importance in the adoption process;
9. Anticipating and managing challenges as an adoptive family; and
10. Making a lifelong commitment to a child.

B. Training, Assessment, Resources, Support and Skills pre-service foster/adopt training

STARs pre-service training is a prerequisite to becoming a licensed foster/adoptive home. Foster/adopt parents must successfully complete 27 hours of training as well as the ten hours of assessment interwoven with the training. After demonstrating that they meet the required competencies, they then become professional foster/adoptive parents.

Those wanting to adopt must take an additional 12 hours of STARs, Making the Commitment to Adoption (Spaulding) Pre-service training.

All STARs and Spaulding sessions are co-taught by a professional staff member of the agency/contracted provider and an experienced, currently licensed, professional foster/adoptive parent.

Following is an overview of the nine STARs sessions, each of which is three hours in length: **(Sessions are limited to one a week.)**

Session One: Connecting with STARs

Session One connects participants with the Foster STARs/Adopt STARs program. Participants learn how the pre-service training provides the formative principles of assessment, selection, licensing, and approval. The competencies needed for successful fostering and adopting are reviewed in relation to the STARs pre-service sessions and the process of becoming a foster or adoptive family.

Participants discover how to define family foster care and adoption. They learn how children and families get referred for services, and they explore challenges and rewards of fostering and adopting. Session One features a video that dramatically portrays fostering and adopting experiences.

Session Two: Teamwork Toward Permanency

This session introduces the importance of family relationships and the role families play in supporting the child's identity, cultural identity, and self-esteem. Participants identify major tasks in planning for permanence, including ways to preserve connections and continuity through times of change. Teamwork is presented as the best way to promote permanence for children and families. Trainees discover the unique role of foster parents and adoptive parents as members of a professional team.

Session Three: Meeting Developmental Needs: Attachment

This session reviews the "basics" about child growth and development. It considers how important bonding and attachment are for growth and development. Session Three emphasizes ways that the team, and especially the foster or adoptive parent, may build positive attachments in order to meet developmental needs.

Session Four: Meeting Developmental Needs: Loss

Separation and loss critically affect the child's growth and development, particularly in family foster care and adoption. Participants learn the types of losses children encounter before entering foster care. They learn how placement can deepen the child's sense of loss. Trainees review the stages of loss and consider how they influence the child's feelings and behaviors. Loss is presented as a universal issue. Foster families and adoptive families consider how they have dealt with losses in their lives. They discuss how they might approach

losses that come with fostering and adopting, and how they can be “loss managers” for children.

Session Five: Strengthening Family Relationships

This session revisits how families promote identity, cultural identity, and self-esteem in children. Participants review the child welfare concept that children in placement should rejoin their families whenever possible. They discuss how the team can support reunification.

The role of visiting in strengthening family relationships is explored. Concrete information explains how to plan for visits, how to prepare children for them, and how to handle reactions afterwards. The importance of families to children in the adoption process is discussed in terms of lifelong needs for identity and self-esteem.

Session Six: Meeting Developmental Needs: Discipline

This session focuses on the challenges of instilling discipline in children. The content and activities focus on protecting and nurturing children and meeting their developmental needs. Discipline is defined, the goals of effective discipline are identified, and the difference between discipline and punishment is illustrated.

Trainees review the agency’s policy on discipline and discuss the negative effects of physical punishment. Participants learn about the knowledge, skills, and personal qualities needed to instill discipline. They explore the meaning of a child’s behavior and the factors that influence behavior. The session outlines the methods foster and adoptive parents, as team members, can use to meet the goals of effective discipline.

Session Seven: Continuing Family Relationships

This session looks at different ways the team can help to connect children to safe and nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime. Permanency planning goals are outlined, starting with efforts to support families and reunite children with families and kin. Adoption, guardianship, and independent living activities are presented as other ways to promote lifelong connections when children cannot grow up with their families.

Session Eight: Planning for Change

How placement impacts the foster or adoptive family is the focus of this session. The first hours, days, and weeks of a child’s placement in the home are viewed

practically. Trainees learn what to expect, what to ask the caseworker, and how to talk to the child.

Longer-term placement impact is also discussed, including how placement changes the foster or adoptive family. The notion that fostering and adopting carry risks is highlighted through a discussion of abuse allegations. Use of the team for support and focus is emphasized.

Session Nine: Making an Informed Decision

This session offers foster and adoptive parents a chance to learn first hand from experienced members of the foster care team. Panelists including foster parents, adoptive parents, caseworkers, and family members present their perspectives and answer participants' questions. Participants will reflect on their growth and development regarding the pre-service competencies. They begin to make a final decision regarding their commitment to fostering or adopting.

C. STARs, Making the Commitment to Adoption

STARs, Making the Commitment to Adoption, was developed by the Spaulding for Children National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption. The name Spaulding has been used interchangeably with the adoption portion of STARs.

Following is an overview of the four pre-service sessions of STARs, Making the Commitment to Adoption: **(Although the foster/adopt STARs curriculum allows only one session per week, the STARs, Adopt curriculum allows for more flexibility. Two sessions may be conducted in one week.)**

Session One: Exploring Expectations

Trainers share the history and intent of the Making the Commitment to Adopt Curriculum as well as its objectives and assumptions about the training. The meaning of adoption, the process, and the important players in the process are discussed. The video "Before the Adoption Process Begins" is shown to acknowledge participants' hopes and fears about the process and to lead to a discussion of empowering strategies. Participants explore their fantasies and expectations about the child or children that they wish to adopt.

Session Two: Meeting the Needs of Waiting Children

Participants will explore the reasons they feel they could adopt particular children and view the videotape, "The Children Who Wait", to focus on the realities of adopting children who have been abused, neglected, abandoned, and have lived in the child welfare system. Particular attention is given to the issues of

separation, loss, grief, attachment, and issues related to parenting the child who has been sexually abused.

Session Three: Exploring Adoption Issues

Using the Family Network Diagram, participants will explore family supports that may assist them in adopting children who have been abused, neglected or abandoned. The videotape, "Common Issues in Adoption," addresses issues for which participants will develop strategies in their teams. Participants will be given information on predictable crisis periods in adoption and use their Family Network Diagrams and Genograms to explore their strengths, needs, and challenges in planning for adoption.

Session Four: Making the Commitment

This final session of the training focuses on helping participants look at resources, the commitment necessary for adoption, and tools to help parents get information to make a decision and commitment to adoption of a particular child. The participants will review their ecomaps, view the videotape, "Characteristics of Successful Adoptive Families," and review a number of tools for getting information and to guide them in making their decisions about adopting. Participants will also be recognized for completing the training.

D. STARS Learning Guide for the Caregiver Who Knows the Child.

This guide is an adaptation of the Foster STARS/Adopt STARS resource training curriculum published by the Child Welfare League of America. The guide is used as pre-service training for caretakers who already have a meaningful relationship with the child to be placed. The relationship can be a connection by family or by association (a teacher, neighbor, etc.).

The guide is meant to be used as an independent study guide, but may be used in group training sessions, or in a combination of both methods. The worker should be flexible in presenting the training method without detracting from the integrity of the program.

At least 10 hours of assessment is required to occur during the pre-service training process.

II In-Service Training

NOTE: IN-SERVICE TRAINING IS A REQUIREMENT FOR CONTINUED FOSTER PARENT LICENSURE. TRAINING HOURS ARE TO BE CHECKED AT THE TIME OF RELICENSURE. Please refer to E-6, Foster Parent Training, for the number of hours required. The foster parent may choose from the following selections:

A. STARs In-Service Training
10 Modules (81 Hours)

Module 1: The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk. 12 hours

- Session 1 Understanding and Assessing Self-esteem
- Session 2 Building Self-esteem and Understanding Behavior
- Session 3 Communicating with Children and Youth (Part 1)
- Session 4 Communicating with Children and Youth (Part 2)

Module 2: Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs. 6 hours

- Session 1 Promoting Positive Behavior
- Session 2 Promoting Self-responsibility and Responding to Unacceptable Behavior

Module 3: Addressing Developmental Issues Related to Sexuality. 3 hours

Module 4: Responding to the Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse. 6 hours

- Session 1 Understanding Sexual Abuse
- Session 2 Responding to the Issues of Sexual Abuse

Module 5: Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families. 9 hours

- Session 1 Respecting and Supporting Child/Birth Family Ties
- Session 2 Supporting Contact Between Children and Their Families
- Session 3 Becoming Partners in Parenting

Module 6: Working as a Professional Team Member. 9 hours

- Session 1 Strengthening Teamwork Skills
- Session 2 Developing Your Professional Role
- Session 3 Conflict as Opportunity

Module 7: Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity. 6 hours

- Session 1 Valuing and Making a Commitment to Cultural Competence
- Session 2 Helping Children Develop Lifebooks

Module 8: Promoting Permanency Outcomes. 9 hours

- Session 1 Providing Children Safe and Nurturing Lifetime Relationships Through Reunification
- Session 2 Providing Children Permanent Families Through the Goal of Adoption
- Session 3 Providing Permanency through Guardianship, Long-term Foster Care and Independent Living

Module 9: Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family. 6 hours

- Session 1 Managing the Change in Your Family
- Session 2 Managing the Impact of Child Abuse/Neglect Allegations

Module 10: Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children and Families. 15 hours

- Session 1 Understanding Risk and Protective Factors
- Session 2 Understanding Chemical Dependency
- Session 3 Recognizing the Impact of Parental Chemical Abuse on the Child and Family
- Session 4 Understanding the Implications of Prenatal AOD Exposure for Parenting Young Children
- Session 5 Developing Partnerships with Birth Parents and Working with the Team to Strengthen Families

- B. **Self-Awareness Tool; Transracial Parenting Project.** The Transracial Parenting Project, developed by the North American Council on Adoptable Children, is a **voluntary** resource for those considering parenting children of a different race, culture, or ethnicity. The project was developed to provoke thought and discussion by parents making that decision. It is not to be used as a tool to assess a parent's ability to foster or adopt transculturally.

The Transracial Parenting Project is comprised of three components: Self Awareness Tool, Training Curriculum, and a Parenting Resource Manual.

Foster/Adopt training hours will be awarded only for the hours spent in the group session. The group session is to be facilitated by a non-agency person and someone not connected with the assessment process.

- C. **Local training resources** may also be used to help a foster/adoptive parent participate in needed training. Examples of such training are Infant CPR (available through the Red Cross), Systematic Training in Effective Parenting (S.T.E.P.), Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.), Nutrition, and Locating Community Resources for Foster Children and developing a resource directory for your own county.

TITLE:	CHILD WELFARE MANUAL
SECTION 6:	RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
CHAPTER 2:	RESOURCE PROVIDER TRAINING-STARS
ATTACHMENT B:	PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING; STARS COMPENTENCIES
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The cost of training from an outside source will not be paid unless it is approved in advance by the local office. (Please refer to E-6, Attachment D, Guidelines for Award of Credit.)

MEMORANDA HISTORY: